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SUBJECT: ROSCOSMOS ON SPACE COOPERATION WITH KAZAKHSTAN,
AND OTHERS

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Summary

1. (SBU) Russian officials regard space cooperation with Kazakhstan as on track, despite reported disputes over leasing arrangements for the Baikonur cosmodrome and compensation for damages caused by a recent rocket explosion at the site. Plans for the construction in the Russian Far East of a new civilian launch facility for manned-flights are underway; if realized, the facility would contribute to the GOR's effort to stimulate development in that region. Roscosmos representatives stressed to us the need for the central government to continue to play the leading role in space activities. They were dismissive of the possibilities for commercial space travel. End Summary.

"Two Brothers"

2. (SBU) On October 30, Embassy met with Vyacheslav Lisitsin, Director of the International Cooperation Department at Roscosmos. Lisitsin was keen to dismiss claims that there were serious troubles with Kazakhstan over Russia's leasing of the Baikonur cosmodrome for space launches. He emphasized that Russia had developed strong relations with Kazakhstan and that the two were "essentially brothers." His statements were consistent with remarks made in Astana in October by FM Lavrov, who praised Russian-Kazakhstani cooperation in Baikonur.

3. (SBU) Lisitsin admitted that a few "delicate" problems exist with Baikonur. He referred to the September 6 rocket accident in which a Proton-M rocket carrying a Japanese commercial satellite crashed shortly after lift-off, scattering debris and hazardous material in the nearby area. Kazakhstan reportedly seeks about \$60 million in damages for the accident. Lisitsin said that the two governments had established a commission to study the accident. The incident risked delaying the late October launch of another rocket carrying three GLONASS (Global Navigation Satellite System) satellites.

Space in the Far East

4. (SBU) In September, Roscosmos announced plans to build a new cosmodrome for civilian launches, including manned flights, in the Russian Far East no earlier than 2020. Military launches would continue at Plesetsk. Lisitsin told us that a new launch facility on Russian territory would help stimulate the economy in the Far Eastern region, providing

jobs and opportunities, especially in the development of space technologies. A new launch site also would help develop the means to accomplish Russia's future manned space missions to the moon and Mars. However, for now, the new launch site is simply a "political announcement." Lisitsin did not provide any details on possible locations for the new site.

Chinese on the ISS?

15. (SBU) Following the October International Space Station (ISS) mission featuring the first Malaysian crew member, Chinese government officials reportedly expressed interest in placing a Chinese crew member on board the ISS. When asked how Russia felt about China's possible participation, Lisitsin said he knew nothing about it. He and the other Roscosmos officials at the meeting looked skeptical and made no comments about what role China might play.

State: The Final Frontier

16. (SBU) Lisitsin stressed to us that no country that is serious about pursuing a space program can rely primarily on private industry. The state must play the leading role. Besides satellite launches, there is little profit to be found in space, he contended. Lisitsin insisted that the role of the state is vital for reasons that go beyond just R&D, including licensing, regulation, and liability of space projects. He downplayed the possibilities of commercial space tourism as a viable industry. When we mentioned some of the latest entrepreneurial initiatives for space travel, such as sub-orbital commercial flights, Lisitsin and other Roscosmos officials shrugged.

Comment

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17. (SBU) Lisitsin's downplaying of space tourism and praise for the state's central role in space are consistent with the general tenor of a more self-confident GOR. Lisitsin was quick to dismiss at anything which harkened back to the image of a cash-strapped Russia seeking to shore up its underfunded space program by catering to wealthy space tourists.
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